

University of California Science Team (UCST)

Statement of Neutrality



Last Updated: October 21, 2010



Introduction. In February 2005, the State of California Resources Agency signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with agencies in the US Department of Agriculture and the US Department of Interior with the stated goal of developing an active multiparty adaptive management and monitoring plan consistent with the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment. The University of California was asked to serve as a neutral third party with expertise in projects of this sort. The exact language of the MOU is included below (Recital D). Our response was to assemble the current team of 12 principal investigators that incorporates the necessary expertise – the UC Science Team (UCST). As requested we have designed, reviewed, and revised an adaptive management and monitoring proposal. As we continue the implementation of this proposal, we present this Statement of Neutrality in order to precisely define our role as a neutral third party of experts and to provide a means for external oversight and conflict resolution.

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
among
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
USDA FOREST SERVICE
PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGION and RESEARCH STATION,
USDI FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE,
and STATE OF CALIFORNIA RESOURCES AGENCY**

This **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING** (this “**MOU**”) is hereby entered into as of February ____, 2005 by and among the United States Department of Agriculture (“**USDA**”) and the USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region and Research Station, hereinafter referred to collectively as the “**Forest Service**,” the United States Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Region, California/Nevada Operations Office, hereinafter referred to as the “**Fish and Wildlife Service**,” and the State of California, Resources Agency, hereinafter referred to as the “**State**.” The Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and the State may be referred to individually as a “**Party**” and collectively as the “**Parties**.”

R E C I T A L S

D. The Forest Service is interested in building stakeholder understanding and trust in the implementation of the ROD. The Forest Service and State recognize the value of using the University of California (“**University**”) **as a neutral third party with expertise in projects of this sort to assist in developing a process with the Forest Service and interested stakeholders to refine an active adaptive management and monitoring system.** This refined adaptive management and monitoring process will inform and contribute to the improvement in implementation of land management practices, as prescribed, that will restore and protect valued natural resources and reduce the threats to them and communities at risk.

Memorandum of Understanding Partners (MOUP) are defined as:

1. United States Department of Agriculture (“**USDA**”) USDA, Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region and Research Station, hereinafter referred to collectively as the “**Forest Service**”
2. United States Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Region, California/Nevada Operations Office, hereinafter referred to as the “**Fish and Wildlife Service**”
3. State of California, Resources Agency, hereinafter referred to as the “**State**”

UCST Statement of Neutrality

In all matters relating to the Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Project, we will strive to provide relevant scientific information that describes the situation accurately and is characterized by transparency, reproducibility, and independence. Specifically we agree to abide by the following conventions and procedures.

1. Establish and maintain expertise

All research products must be reviewed by qualified peers without conflict of interest. We therefore subjected our proposal to anonymous peer review by researchers without affiliations with the University of California, United States Forest Service, or the State of California. We will continue to rely on the standard of anonymous peer review to maintain our scientific credibility.

2. Third party status

The UCST offers scientific results generated through an open and transparent process. We will endeavor in all matters of consequence to the Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Program to reach consensus and report this consensus through the scheduled reporting requirements (at a minimum, one report per year). Should differences of scientific interpretation and meaning remain; we will fully document the evidence and reasoning supporting each of the conflicting conclusions.

In order to ensure our third party status no member of the UCST will willingly promote or defend management practices of any MOUP concerning the scope of research defined by the UCST within the Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Program. Nor will members of the UCST willingly support or defend the positions taken by stakeholders in the conflicts surrounding MOUP management practices concerning the scope of research defined by the UCST within the Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Program. The scope of this research is specifically defined as management practices related to the Sugar Pine and Fish Camp projects in the Sierra National Forest and the Last Chance project in the Tahoe National Forest¹. We recognize the potential for members of the UCST to be compelled by law to provide testimony. It is important to acknowledge this testimony as personal views that do not necessarily reflect the vetted judgments of the UCST.

¹*Added October 2010:* In 2007, the scope of this research at the northern study site was expanded to include the adjacent Eldorado Spotted Owl Demography study that includes portions of the Tahoe and Eldorado National Forests. This expansion was necessary to increase the sample size of spotted owls for the SNAMP study because the Last Chance project site did not have a sufficient sample of owls. At the southern study site, the scope of this

research has also expanded beyond Fish Camp and Sugar Pine projects to include the Cedar Valley project site and the entire SNAMP fisher study area. Again, this expansion was necessary in order to increase the sample size of Pacific fisher for the SNAMP study. As stated in the SNAMP Workplan (2007), it was expected that the SNAMP Fisher Team study area would need to expand beyond the Sugar Pine in order to adequately increase the sample size of the fishers under study. It was also necessary to include the Cedar Valley project area for a more comprehensive fire modeling analysis of the Sugar Pine study area. Please see the attached maps of the northern and southern SNAMP study areas.

3. Neutral

To function as a third party neutral requires intellectual and political independence on our part with respect to the controversy surrounding MOUP management practices on forested lands in California's Sierra Nevada. While a completely unbiased perspective is a philosophical ideal, we will strive to avoid any conflict of interest, and will make public (via posting on our public website) all agreements, decisions, and documents relevant to UCST research within the Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management Program.

4. External Oversight

The Associate Vice-President of Agriculture and Natural Resources for the University of California appointed a three-member panel of distinguished scholars with distance from the particular issues at hand. These scholars will provide guidance to the UCST regarding its efforts to act as a neutral third party of experts. This panel will also report to the Vice-President regarding performance of the UCST and the efficacy and wisdom of the University's service of this sort to the State of California.

5. Conflict Resolution

Should it be necessary, resolutions to conflicts concerning the USCT will be achieved in an open and transparent process. Stakeholders concerns regarding a UCST member's behavior related to neutrality should be shared with the UCST academic coordinator who will direct the issue to the UCST lead PI if necessary. If the UCST can not develop an internally acceptable resolution, the UCST lead PI will ask the external oversight committee to review the issue. The external oversight committee will then report guidance and insights back to the UCST that the UCST will then consider in creating a final resolution to the specific issue.

Principal Investigators: UC Science Team

Roger Bales	_____	_____
Reginald Barrett	_____	_____
John Battles.- Lead PI	_____	_____
Martha Conklin	_____	_____
Lynn Huntsinger	_____	_____
Maggi Kelly	_____	_____
Qinghua Guo	_____	_____
Rocky Gutiérrez	_____	_____
Kimberly Rodrigues	_____	_____
Scott Stephens	_____	_____
M. Zach Perry	_____	_____
Rick Sweitzer	_____	_____